STRONG CALL FOR TANGIBLE RESULTS IN ALLEVIATING ENERGY POVERTY

Johannesburg 9 December, 2009

The International Energy Forum (IEF) and the Department of Energy of South Africa Symposium on Energy Poverty gathered policy and energy specialists from the IEA, NEPAD, OPEC, OFID, TERI, WEC, WEF and the World Bank as well as independent experts in Johannesburg on 8 – 9 December 2009.

Speaking after the event IEF Secretary General, Noé van Hulst stated that “....no nation in history has significantly reduced its poverty levels without increasing its energy usage. It is crystal clear that access to modern energy services is one of the cornerstones of poverty reduction and a key element in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).”

Participants concluded that energy poverty should be added as a 9th Millennium Development Goal as the issue stalls progress in achieving the existing MDGs. They also highlighted that capacity building in statistics is necessary to provide a basis for the development of benchmarks and indicators for energy poverty against which needs can be defined and progress measured.

The causes of energy poverty cannot be divorced from the causes of general poverty, the two are intertwined; for countries in which the per capita income is less than $1 USD a day, 90% of the population use biomass or dung for their cooking. Lighting, cooking, heating and automotive energy are the four essential elements that must be addressed.

The symposium agreed that energy poverty programmes are severely underfunded, and the credit crisis has made an already difficult situation critical. This investment gap needs to be filled and innovative funding mechanisms which target realistic and measurable projects, and leverage co-public - private cooperation must be established with the active involvement of local communities.

In concluding, participants called for a new impetus and more widespread participation in the initiative “Energy for the Poor” launched by King Abdullah at the Jeddah Energy Meeting and supported by the G20 leaders. With global support it has the potential to mobilize the significantly increased funding required to bridge the energy poverty investment gap (tens of billions of US dollars per annum) and encourage multilateral cooperation and the definition of concrete objectives for domestic policy reform necessary to achieve tangible progress.

Supported by IEF Ministers at the IEF Ministerial in Cancun (30-31 March 2010) the IEF Secretariat in co-operation with IEA, OPEC and WEC could take the lead in detailing and enacting the key components of the “Energy for the Poor” initiative. Its success and sustainability will depend on the genuine commitment of all IEF countries and their willingness to co-operate based not only on consideration of the less-well-off, but also on the understanding that like climate-change - poverty knows no borders. Solutions developed by this initiative will have potential positive impacts across the globe.

The concluding statement of the symposium is available at www.iefs.org.sa
International Energy Forum (IEF)

The IEF is the world’s largest recurring gathering of Energy Ministers. Unique in that participants include not only IEA and OPEC countries, but also key players like Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa. The IEF countries account for more than 90% of global oil and gas supply and demand. Through the Forum and its associated events, Ministers and Energy Industry Executives participate in a dialogue which is of increasing importance to global energy security. The IEF and the global energy dialogue are promoted by a permanent Secretariat based in the Diplomatic Quarter of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The next IEF Ministerial will be hosted by Mexico in Cancun 29-31 March 2010, co-hosted by Germany and Kuwait.

The IEF also co-ordinates the Joint Oil Data Initiative (JODI) in co-operation with APEC, Eurostat, IEA, OLADE, OPEC and the UNSD. For more information visit the JODI web site www.jodidata.org

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